



Operation Predator



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ICE ARRESTS MORE THAN 1,000 CHILD PREDATORS AND SEX OFFENDERS IN LESS THAN 3 MONTHS

-- Arrests are part of ongoing initiative called "Operation Predator"--

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Michael J. Garcia, director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced that ICE has arrested more than 1,000 child predators and sex offenders since the July 9 launch of "Operation Predator," a comprehensive Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiative to protect children worldwide.

Working with its counterparts in DHS along with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Justice, ICE has made arrests in almost every state and major city in the nation. Internationally, by coordinating with ICE overseas Attaché offices and foreign law enforcement agencies, Operation Predator has also netted targets in around the globe. As the Administration and DHS increases the focus on the international sex tourism industry, a primary Operation Predator target, international arrests will continue to increase. Both U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens have been arrested, prosecuted, and/or sentenced under Operation Predator, including the following:

- Non-citizen child sex offenders whose crimes made them subject to deportation
- U.S. residents who traveled abroad to engage in sex with minors
- Individuals who molested mentally-impaired minors
- Individuals who used the Internet to lure minors to engage in sex with them
- Individuals who smuggled foreign minors into this country to work as prostitutes
- Individuals who manufactured or distributed child pornography via the Internet

"As President Bush said this week before the United Nations, there is a new humanitarian crisis spreading across the globe: that of human smuggling and trafficking. More and more children, boys and girls not even old enough to read, are falling victim to the increasingly organized and profitable trade of human trafficking. In our own country, certain individuals pay significant sums of money to travel to other countries and engage in prostitution with children," said Garcia "Through Operation Predator, and the PROTECT Act just passed by Congress and signed by the President, the Department of Homeland Security is working around the clock to identify and remove these people not only from American streets, but also to hold them accountable wherever they commit these heinous crimes."

To achieve its objectives, Operation Predator employs a three-pronged strategy of identifying child predators, investigating these individuals, and removing them from our streets. Coordinated nationally and internationally by the ICE Cyber Crimes Center in Virginia, Operation Predator brings together the many ICE disciplines and field offices in a united operation against those who prey on children.

Operation Predator also relies upon an unprecedented partnership between ICE and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). ICE has devoted two special agents to work full-time at NCMEC to process tips received on the NCMEC hotline / Internet site and to send actionable leads to ICE field offices for investigation.

Aside from the arrests, Operation Predator has reached several other milestones since its July 9, 2003 launch.

- 1) Since July 9, ICE has developed an enhanced investigative and public outreach campaign to combat international child sex tourism. The investigative aspect of the campaign is using provisions of the recently enacted PROTECT Act of 2003 to better target U.S. residents traveling abroad to engage in sex with minors, as well as those serving as child sex tour operators. In the first case in the nation to use the new law, prosecutors in Seattle this week filed child sex tourism charges against a man arrested by ICE upon his return from Cambodia. According to the criminal complaint, this individual has admitted molesting as many as **50** children. In another ICE case (involving the old child sex tourism law), a former school pediatrician is on trial this week in New York City on charges of traveling to Mexico to engage in sex with minors at a beachside resort that catered to pedophiles. ICE is also preparing to launch a public awareness campaign involving pamphlets and videos to inform the public about child sex tourism, which is estimated by non-profit groups to victimize **2 million** children worldwide.
- 2) Since July 9, the National Child Victim Identification Program (NCVIP), which is housed at the ICE Cyber Crimes Center, has positively identified children featured in **256** digital child pornography images at the request of other law enforcement agencies. ICE has provided this data to the requesting law enforcement agency to help them rescue children in the images or to assist in prosecutions. Developed jointly with NCMEC, the Justice Department, FBI, Secret Service and other agencies, NCVIP is the nation's only comprehensive, searchable system for identifying digital child pornography images. It is designed to help law enforcement worldwide identify and rescue those children featured in the images. NCVIP is also designed to facilitate the prosecution of those who possess or distribute digital child pornography. With assistance from other agencies, NCVIP will eventually contain all known child pornography images on the Internet.
- 3) Since July 9, ICE has obtained from the National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) Sex Offender Registry a consolidated list of registered sex offenders from all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This list, which contained approximately **304,000** names, was vetted through ICE's immigration databases, resulting in more than **470** action leads that have been disseminated to ICE field offices. These leads involve foreign nationals who have been convicted of sex offenses in the U.S. and may be subject to deportation as a result of their crimes. ICE is actively targeting these individuals for arrest.
- 4) Since July 9, the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) in Vermont has fielded more than **141** calls on a toll-free hotline (**1-866-DHS-2ICE**) that was created as part of Operation Predator. The hotline allows the public to report information about child sex offenders and others preying on children. The LESC has forwarded leads to ICE field offices and other law enforcement agencies across the nation. One of these tips led to the arrest of a Kenyan national with AIDS accused of raping a **14**-year-old girl near Boston.

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ICE, the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, was established to bring a unified focus to the enforcement of U.S. immigration and customs laws, with the principal goal of preventing violations by terrorists and other criminals who threaten the nation's security.